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Select Cafes

RESOLVED.

Specially, tending to the *right Ordering of the Heart*, that we may *comfortably walk with God* in our *general and particular Callings* : &c.

In a LETTER to a pious Friend in *England*.

By THOMAS SHEPARD, M. A.

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To the CHRISTIAN READER.

THIS holy Letter of that ready Scribe of Christ's Kingdom, [Mr. Shepard of New-England] is so full of Grace and Truth, that it needs no other Epistle commendatory than it self.

Yet seeing the Lot is unexpectedly fallen upon my Pen, to give it a Superscription that it may pass current from Hand to Hand; I do heartily in the first Place, dedicate it to thee, thou bleeding-troubled-Spirit, as a choice cordial Friend, an Interpreter, one of a Thousand, that doth not only speak thy Heart, but by the Comforter (whom Christ hath promised to send) to thy Heart.

It may be this Paper present is sent on Embassy, from Heaven, on Purpose, to set thy House in Order, to unty thy Bosom-Knots, to bind the strong Man, and cast him out of thy Doors; that thy Heart may be once again set at Liberty, to serve the Lord thy God in thy general and particular Calling, whose Service is thy Freedom. What is here sent by this Ambassador of Christ, (who is now the Voice of one crying in a Wilderness) to a weary and heavy laden Soul in this Island; I had rather it should appear to thy Judgment in the serious Reading, and to thy Conscience in the home Application thereof, than from my Opinion of it: Therefore I shall only add (as the Contents of this Letter) certain select Cases, proposed and resolved in the several Paragraphs thereof, as they lie in Order in the Pages following, viz.

1. Trouble

To the CHRISTIAN READER.

1. Trouble of Mind in *civil Affairs* by the secret Injection of *religious Thoughts.* Page 3.
2. From what Spirit, such Suggestions do arise. *P. 4.*
3. How to entertain them when they crowd in. Page 8.
4. Concerning the *not being humbled for sinful Distractions* that hinder and interrupt the Spiritual Performance of holy Duties. Page 12.
5. How a *Christian*, may be said to be under the *Covenant of Works.* Page 16.
6. How to conceive aright of that *Mystery of Mysteries*, the blessed Persons in the *Trinity.* Page 19.
7. The Soul's *Aptness* to go to God *immediately* in holy Duties, without taking Christ Jesus by the Hand. Page 22.
8. The *End and Use of absolute Promises.* Page 28.
9. How to apply *absolute Promises* to thy self, though they are made indefinitely without Condition. Page 27. & 31.
10. A notable Discovery of a *secret Unwillingness* in the Soul, to seek God in the *strictest solemn Services*, before it entereth into them; *Weariness* of them, while they last; and a *Gladness*, when they are ended. Page 39.
11. A sound Confutation of that Heretical *Arminian Tenet*; *viz.* That the Strength of Grace is to be got rather by *Argumentation*, than inward *Communication* and *Influence* arising from *Union with CHRIST.* Page 42.
12. The Experiences of this tried Servant of Christ, (who is the Pen-man hereof) *how he was cured of atheistical Thoughts*: whether they did wear out, or whether by the dint of Arguments, they were rationally overthrown. Page 44.
13. Lastly, whether those Changes, which a Child of God hath sometimes, and those Movings of Spirit are caused by a natural Temper, or God's Spirit. Page 49.

All

To the CHRISTIAN READER.

All which select Cases, (and many more, that collaterally issue from their Sides) are judiciously resolved with much Perspicuity and Brevity in these few Sheets, by the only Judge of all Controversies; the two-edged Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

Thus humbly beseeching thee, to read over this Epistle of Christ to thee, with the same Spirit of Love, and of a sound Mind, which indited every Line in it:

I do desire to leave thee at the Throne of Grace, in the Arms of Christ, with the Father of all Comfort; that thou mayest receive the Peace of God which passeth all Understanding, and be crowned with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory.

I subscribe my self, Friend,

Thine in any spiritual

Furtherance of thy Faith,

Dated from
Charter-house in
London, Feb. 1.

1647,

William Adderley.



Christian Reader.

Being desired to peruse and give our Opinion of the Resolutions in this Letter now presented to thy View, We must confess, they appeared to us very precious. For we have seldom seen Acuteness, Profoundness, and Godliness, so eminently, equally; and happily matched. There are in Christ's School divers Forms, Elementaries, and Men of exercised Wits. The Scholar proposing these Cases was no Puny, and he was happy in meeting with a Teacher so able for Resolution. Therefore, who ever reads and heeds, will not repent of his Labour. But the more knowing the Reader is, and the more experienced in the Ways of Christ, the more Delight may be take in, and the more profit may be reap by these pious and profound Resolutions. So we are

Thine in Christ Jesus,

March 27.

1648.

John Geree,
And
William Greenhill.

C O R R E C T I O N S.

Page.	Line.	Read.
8.	17.	banish from you
9.	4, 5.	Your Friends have had the Welcome and have lodged
12.	13, 14.	involuntary
20.	16.	(as Election
48.	21, 22.	Again to your Complaint, [And I suppose this Paragraph should come in at the End of Page 18.]



Dear Sir,

I Dare not multiply many words in acknowledging and professing my own unfitness and insufficiency to yield your loving and most welcome Letter, that satisfaction which both Yourself desire, and it deserves: Neither yet will I be so unfaithful to you; seeing your expectation puts me to reply: Neither ought I (I think) be so unserviceable to JESTIS CHRIST, who in you, and by you, beckens to me to take this call to write to you, and not to neglect so fair a season; seeing especially it may be possible my dying Letter to you, before I depart from hence, and return to him, as not knowing but our last disasters and Sea-straits, of which I wrote to you, may be but preparations for the execution of this next approaching voyage. Yet our eyes are to the hills, and our desires are your prayers: and at this time my endeavour shall be in respect of your self, to break open that light to you, and to prepare it to you, with that brevity I may, and with what plainness I am able: beseeching the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who must be when all fails, the wonderful

B

Counsellor,

2 *Of ORDERING the THOUGHTS*

Counsellor, to give you the spirit of revelation ; and that after you have suffered, a while by these outward temptations, doubts, fears, desertions, distractions, which the Letter mentions, he would make you perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you. And this I verily think will be the unexpected, yet happy, joyful and most glorious end of them : For since I have observed and seen the lamentable ruins of the soul, and seeming graces of many men, by being rock'd asleep in a quiet still calm, easy performance of duties ; without such a-waking temptations and tumults within, which it self complains of : I say since I have observed what a deal of mud is in the bottom of such standing Pools, and what a deal of filth is in such Motes, which are inwardly at ease, and not emptied from vessel to vessel ; next unto the donation of the Lord Jesus to a man, I have accounted such tumultuous heart-storms and uproars, together with the fruitful strange effects of them, the second mercy. For I never saw that man kept from secret putrefaction and corruption, that was not usually salted with such temptations, (especially in a Christian's first Apprentiship) which usually preserve him entire till death. And therefore, Dear Sir, faint not ; for Jesus Christ will raise a world of blessings out of your present Chaos and confusions. But I make haste to answer, before your reply to my first Letter. Your complaints are many.

CASE

C A S E I.

Of ordering the Thoughts in Civil Employments.

Your first Trouble is, concerning your *disturbances in Civil affairs*, by the secret injection of *religious thoughts*; so that you know not how to follow the one, without hazard of grieving the spirit, and breaking your peace, in not maintaining and nourishing at the same time the other: and hence being drawn to go two ways at the same time, which you cannot well do, your heart is disquieted, and your peace much interrupted.

This of yours, puts me in mind of the complaint of an honest, yet plain man, to an able Minister once, who in bewailing his condition to him, among other miseries, this was not the least; (*viz*) that he was exceedingly troubled with good thoughts, so that he could not follow his place, unless very oft he did stand still and pray, for fear of grieving the Spirit, (as he thought) and losing his season of being heard in heaven: For said Conscience oft unto him, How dost thou know but this may be thy accepted time, and if thou dost not take it, it may be thou shalt never have it again? I have forgot the Minister's answer; but I am sure in these complaints you go not alone: I have lately known one very able, wise, and godly, put upon the Rack in these kind of thoughts, by him, that envying God's people's peace, knows how to change himself

into

Of ORDERING the THOUGHTS

into an Angel of light. For it being his usual course in the time of his health, to make a Diary of his hourly life, and finding much benefit by it, he was in conscience prest by the power and delusion of Satan, to make and take the same daily survey of his life in the time of his sickness ; by means of which, he spent his enfeebled spirits, cast on fuel to fire his sickness : and had not a friend of his convinced him of his erroneous conscience, misleading him at that time, he had murderd his body, out of conscience to save his soul, and to preservye his grace. And do you think these were the motions of God's spirit, which like those *Locusts*, *Rev.* 9. 9, 10, had faces like men, but had tails like Scorpions, and stings in their tails.

Your thoughts I know, are not likely to produce the same effects ; although you have the same efficient : and because you say your peace is hereby disturbed by ignorance, as not knowing what to do in the midst of these civil actions and these religious thoughts ; I conceive that *two* things are to be sadly considered of, for the cure of them.

First how to know when such religious pious thoughts come from God's spirit, and when from the Devil transforming himself into an Angel of light ; or from a well-melted stirring conscience, yet blind. For when you know they come from God's spirit, you are bound to nourish them ; but when not, you are not bound to embrace nor comply with them. *Secondly*, Learn how your soul is

to behave and carry it self in Civil employments : For when you see how you do, and may honour God in following them, your spirit will not be so unquiet, if at any time you embrace not the suggestions of the other.

1. For the first briefly ; all good motions and thoughts are not the spirit's motions : as may thus appear.

There be *three* things chiefly by which we may discern the motions, suggestions, and thot's which come from God's spirit : all which concurring together in a good action, or thought, or word(not one alone) will make discovery whether they are from God's spirit or not.

1. If it be suggested for God's ends, its from God's spirit : to act so high as for a supernatural end, must arise from a supernatural principle, which only is God's spirit. Pharisaical actions were for a double selfish end, and hence not from God's spirit, but nature, and their own spirit, 1. To be seen of men. 2. If they did any of them abhor this, yet it was to purchase and gender in their own minds an opinion of holiness before God : and hence Christ gives them this Item, in giving Alms, that they should not let their right hand know what their left hand doth : for many men will do good acts, least they should by the neglect of them, think themselves hypocrites, and so be troubled for them. Christ would have us not to take notice of what we do for such an end.

2. If they be animated and quickned from God's

6 Of ORDERING the THOUGHTS

God's command, for the higher measure of holiness, for glorious ends, without a warrant from the Word, is the more sordid superstition. Christ healed the leper : when he charged him with anger to tell no man ; he, no question for a good end, published the miracle the more : this was a good motion, but it was sinful in him, being cross to Christ's command. When Christ would have washed *Peter's* feet, he had many thoughts that came into his head, concerning his own vileness, and Christ's glory ; and had a good end and meaning in his answers ; yet his humility crossing Christ's command, the Lord professeth against it and him for it, that he had no part in him, if he should go on in it.

3. God's Spirit sets a man on work in due season : For let the duty be commanded and rightly directed, yet if it be not done in season, it is not from God's Spirit : Hence Psal. 1. *The righteous bring forth fruit in its season* : and hence Solomon speaks of *words spoken in season, are as apples of Gold* : and hence we read in Ecclesiastes, of *a time and season for every thing under the Sun*. And therefore when there is a season of God's appointing for civil things or busines ; it is not season now to be molested or perplexed in it, by the injection and evocation of those thoughts which we think to proceed from the Spirit of GOD. I know indeed, that the Spirit of God doth enable a man to do whatever good he doth ; but as Grace makes Nature sometimes to serve, so sin-
ful

ful Nature brings Grace into captivity, (which *Paul* complains of, Rom. 7.) and makes Grace to serve it. To exhort and reprove another for sin, is from God's spirit that it is done ; but to reprove at an unseasonable time, its from sinful corruption, abusing God's grace, and making *Sampson* to grind. Its from the excellency of a knife to cut well ; but to cut my finger with it when I should be cutting my meat with it ariseth not from the end of the knife, nor from the intention of him that made it ; so to think of good things, it is from the spirit, I grant ; but to think of them in such a season that God sets you a work to mind and follow other occasions, its from the enemy of God's spirit, and your own peace. For as it is a sin to nourish worldly thoughts when God sets you a work in spiritual heavenly employments ; so it is, in some respects, as great a sin to suffer your self to be distracted by spiritual thoughts, when God sets you on work in civil, yet lawful, employments : such thoughts, I conceive, are but the leaven of Monkish holiness, if they divert you from your lawful affairs, when the Lord calls you to follow them. For the Lord never calls you to two divers employments at the same time, unless you make the one to be a means to further the good of the other ; which such pious thoughts in some civil employments do ; it being no piece of Christian wisdom or honesty to turn round in worldly employments so long till by giddiness we fall down, but by secret steps,

steps, ever and anon to look up to heaven and to behold the face of God, to whom only therein we are to approve our selves. But yet it seems your thoughts are so far from being subservient the one to the other, that you are distracted and molested, and your piece interrupted, and your Christian course made troublesome, and an heavy burthen ; which surely cannot be by the yoke of Jesus Christ : therefore you must first bring your troubles in this particular to this issue ; either you may follow your Civil affairs, and nourish these thoughts as helps to maintain your peace, and make you heavenly minded in them, (and if they serve sufficiently to such an end, why are you troubled with them ?) or else you cannot follow God comfortably in civil actions, unless you banish from your thoughts which do so miserably distract you ; and then why do you fear you shall grieve God's spirit, if at the same time you do not give entertainment to them, the unseasonableness of which, speaks plainly they came not from the spirit's suggestions ; besides their hindrance of comfortably walking with God, which the Employments themselves can never hinder.

But you will say, when is the *season* of nourishing such thoughts ?

I answer, Entertain those thoughts as, it may be, you have done some friends, who came to you at that time you had business with strangers, whom you love not so well as your friends ; you have desired them to stay a while

while, until you have done with the other, and then you have returned to your friends, and when the other hath been shut out of the doors, the other hath had the welcome, and hath lodged with you all night ; and thus you have grieved neither, but pleased both. It is so in this case, Worldly employments are our strangers, yet they must be spoke with : Religious thoughts and practices are our friends, these come unto us while God calls us to parley with the other, you cannot speak with both at one time, in one place, without much perplexity : take therefore this course, make much of the good thoughts, but parley not with them till your business is done with strangers ; and towards evening, which is your season, set some time apart every day for meditation, and then make them welcome ; then consider and ponder well what was suggested to you in the day time, and sift every good thought to the bran, for then is your season, and after that let them sup and lodge with you all night, and keep the house with you every day. And surely when the Lord Jesus shall see what a friend you shall make of his Spirit thus, and how wisely you walk therein, you shall not need to fear any grieving of it, at unseasonable times : nay (I say) you will most fearfully grieve his Spirit, if you parley with the conceived suggestions of it at unseasonable times. *What thou doest, do it with all thine heart, saith Solomon. Eccles. 9.*

Therefore when you are to pray, confer, or
C meditate,

meditate, do it with all your mind, and all your thoughts, and all your strength. So when God calls you to worldly employments, do them with all your mind and might ; and when the season of *meditation* comes, take it : which glorious ordinance of God, although many christians use it occasionally, and against some good time, or when they have leisure meeting with them, yet to set some time apart for it in a solemn manner every day, and that in conscience as we do for prayer generally, where is the man to be found that does thus ? These men that thus neglect their season of musing and entring into parley with God's spirit daily, may be well said to grieve the spirit : through the neglect of which Ordinance, God's spirit is as much grieved by professors in *England*, as by any course I know. The Lord awaken us : but I have run too far already in this first part of my answer.

For the second means, *viz.* *How the soul is to carry it self in civil employments*, that so you may not think you do for better, when you listen to good thoughts as you mention.

I say but two things ;

1. Learn to follow them out of an awful respect to the eye, presence, and command of Jesus Christ : and to do what you do in civil busineses, as the work of Christ : When you are riding, or making up breaches between man and man, and then think I am now about the work of Jesus Christ.

2. Seeing your self thus working in worldly employments

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employments for him, you may easily apprehend that for that time God calls you to them, and you attend upon the work of Jesus Christ in them ; that you honour God as much, nay more by the meanest servile worldly act, than if you should have spent all that time in meditation, prayer, or any other spiritual employment, to which you had no call at that time. It is noted therefore by some of *Peter's* wives mother, that when Christ had healed her of her fever, she sate not down at table with Christ in communion with him, which, no question, was sweet ; but ministred at the table, and ran too and fro, and so served him, and acted for him ; wherein she shewed more love, and gave him more honour, *viz.* in that mean service, and in acting for him, than in having communion with him. Now if the Lord would out of his abundant goodness, set the soul in such an acting frame for him, and if it could do its worldly employments, as the work of Christ, and see how greatly it honours Christ in attending on him ; Oh what peace should a christian enjoy, notwithstanding all his distractions every day ! and how easily would such devout thoughts you speak of, be repell'd like darkness before the light ? For the nobleness of those good thoughts you speak of presenting themselves against the mean and base outsides of civil affairs, makes you ready to honour the one, when you are call'd to serve the other : but now, by seeing you do the work of Christ Jesus in them, you shall hereby see

see a glory in the meanest service you perform in civil affairs, and this will make you cleave unto them. But I have said too much about repelling of good thoughts in these times, wherein men have so few ; though, it may be, little enough to satisfy you.

C A S E II.

Of being bumbled for sinful Distractions.

Your second trouble is this, *viz.* That your heart is kept from being bumbled for *sinful distractions*, that hinder and interrupt the spiritual performance of holy duties, and that for two reasons : *First*, Because they be voluntary and accidental. *Secondly*, because they cannot break the covenant between GOD and your Soul, being but infirmities.

Answ. For the latter clause concerning breach of covenant, together with the other.

I say, not only infirmities do not, but the greatest sins cannot make a breach of covenant between GOD and the soul that is once really (not nominally) wrapt up in the covenant of grace. Indeed gross scandalous sins, nay infirmities, when they are given way to, and not resisted, may keep the soul from the fruition, for a time, of God's covenant, but never from the eternal *jus* and right unto it. For as the *Habit* of faith or grace gives a man a constant right to the promise and covenant, which seed ever remains, which habit ever

ever lasts, 1. *Jer. 3. 9.* so the *Act* of faith or grace gives a man fruition of the covenant and the benefit of the promise. And hence by the acting and venting of some sins, wherein there is included the neglect of the exercise of grace, he that is really in covenant with God, may be deprived of the fruition of it; yet seeing the seed of God, and the habit of grace ever remains, he cannot by any sin break his covenant: For the covenant of grace is absolute, wherein the Lord doth not only promise the good, but to begin, and perfect, and fulfil the condition absolutely, without respect of sin; *ex parte creaturæ*. Indeed if God's covenant of grace did (as that of works) depend upon man to fulfil the condition, having sufficient grace to fulfil it, then gross sin might well break the covenant: but seeing God hath undertaken to fulfil the covenant absolutely, notwithstanding all the evils and sins of the soul, no sin can possibly break that knot and covenant, which so firm and resolute love hath once knit. And therefore, if this be a good argument, infirmities cannot break covenant: What cause have I to be humbled for them? so as to say, It is thy mercy Lord that I am not consumed for them, (as you write;) you may upon the same ground say so, If the Lord should desert you, or you forsake the Lord, and so fall into the foulest sin, which I suppose corrupt conscience dares not be so bold as to think or allow of.

2. I say the least sins or infirmities do break the

the first covenant of works : and hence you do not only deserve, but are under the sentence of death, and curse of God, immediately after the least hair's breadth, swerving from the Law by the smallest sin, and most involuntary accidental infirmity. According to the tenour of the law, *the soul that sinneth shall dy* ; and, *cursed is he that continueth not in all things of the Law*, Gal. 3. 10. The least sin being, (*ex parte objecti*) in respect of God against whom it is committed, as horrible and as great as the greatest. For it being an infinite wrong, being the dishonour of an infinite Majesty, there can be no greater wrong than an infinite one ; unless you can imagine a thing greater than that which is infinite : And therefore in this respect, there is as much venom and mischief done against God in the least, as in the greatest sin : And therefore it, and whosoever commits it, deserves death for it, as if they had committed the foulest sin in the world. And therefore after the least and smallest infirmities, you may from hence see what cause you have freely to be humbled, and to confess for them how worthy you are to be destroyed ; yea, even to look upon your self as lying under the sentence of the law and death immediately after the commission of them, and so to mourn bitterly for them.

Object. But you will say, a ' Christian that is under the covenant of grace, is not within the covenant of Works, that Bond is cancelled, the last Will must stand ; and therefore

fore he being out of that covenant, no sins
of his can be said to break the covenant ;
for no man can be said to break that law
under which he is not, and which he is not
bound to keep.

Answe. I answer, every believer has a *double being or standing*, and so there may be put upon him a double respect.

1. First, he may be considered as united to, and having a *spiritual being on Christ* ; and so it is true, he is under *Grace*, and the covenant of *Grace*, and not under the *Law*, nor the covenant of works ; and hence not being under the *Law*, nor bound to keep it as a covenant of life (though it be a *rule of life*) no sin can condemn him, there being *no condemnation to them that are Christ Jesus*, Rom. 8. 1. But as *Christ* is above condemnation, and law, and death, and curse, so is he. And this truly understood, is the foundation of a *Christian's* joy and peace, and glory, every day ; yet so, as tho' sin doth not condemn him, yet he has good reason to say, it is mercy, and meer mercy, Lord, that I am not consumed, that I am not condemned. For sin is the same ; nay grace and God's love aggravates sin ; for to sin against the law, deserves death without recovery ; but to sin when grace has received me, and loved me ; when the blood of *Christ* has been shed abundantly, to deliver me from sin ; Oh this makes the most secret silent sin a crying one ! So that if you do consider this well, you may see what little cause there is to have your heart

heart rising against the deepest humiliation for the least sin, though you be in Christ, and under grace : For, as *Daniel*, when he was put into the Lions den, had not he cause to wonder that he was not torn in pieces by them ? and why ? because it was not from any defect on their parts to tear him in pieces, but from the omnipotent power, and mercy, and grace of his God, that muzzel'd their mouths ; so though no Lion can tear, though no sins can hurt or condemn a Christian, as he is considered in Christ, yet, has not he cause to confess and wonder, and say, Lord, it is thy meer grace and mercy that it is not so ? Which is the act of humiliation your letter saith you can hardly come unto ; and why ? not because God's grace puts any less evil in sin, but because it is meerly grace that keeps it from spitting that venom which otherwise it would.

2. Secondly, A Christian may be considered in respect of his *natural being in himself* ; and thus he is ever under the Law, and as oft as he sinneth, under the sentence of death, and as the Apostle speaks, *by nature even we (justified, quickned) are the children of wrath as well as others*. And thus after the least involuntary accidental sin, you may easily see what cause you have to lie down deeply humbled, mourning under the sentence of death, and God's eternal curse, as a condemned man going to execution, to feel that fire that shall never go out ; looking upon your self as you are in your self, a forlorn cast-away *every moment* : and this

this truly understood is the foundation of a Christian's sorrow, shame, and confusion of face, self-loathing, self-forgetting, self-forsaking, and condemning every day. And, believe it Sir, it is no small Piece of a Christian's skill and work, to put a difference between himself and himself ; himself as he is in Christ, and so to joy and triumph ; and himself as he is growing on his first root, and so to sorrow, and loath, and condemn himself : so that, to wind up all that I have said, look upon your self as in Christ, you may say these involuntary infirmities do not, shall not, condemn me.

But Lord it is Grace, Grace that it is not so, and this is Evangelical humiliation. Look again upon your self, as you stand on your own bottom, and live in your own nature, and so you may say after the least infirmity, I have now broken a most holy and righteous Law, and therefore I am already condemned : O woe is me, I have already undone my self by mine iniquity : and this is Legal humiliation, which serves for mortification, as the first for vification. I know it is very difficult to bring the heart to acknowledge freely it deserves death after so small an involuntary offence. But when the Lord reveals two things, *First*, himself in his glory, *Secondly*, how the least sin strikes him ; I perswade my self, the vilest heart cannot but be forced to confess how just God should be in his severest proceedings against him. And withal consider, the more involuntary any sin is, the more strong and natural

it is, and the more natural, the more horrible ; as to be a natural Thief is far worse than to be a deliberate thief, who sometimes steals : and therefore, good Sir, take heed of looking no deeper, nor seeing no further than the bare act, and unvoluntariness and accidentalness, and suddenness of your infirmities : for if you do, you look through the wrong end of the glass, and they will appear so small, that you will find it a very tough work to bring your heart consentively, to say, (if I may say and use your own phrase) It is thy mercy Lord that I am not consumed for them : But look upon them as indeed they are, in respect of that infinite glory you strike, doing the greatest mischiefs to God by them, and (which makes them the viler) as they are so strong you cannot remove them, and so horrible as that it is natural to you to commit them, &c ; and surely you will not through grace, find such thoughts haunt you long : Not but that they will be, haply, rising and tempting, but never alway vexing and prevailing. Satan's ground reaching as far as the *minds* of God's people ; and therefore so far he may come, and there he may walk ; (for he came into the mind of innocent *Adam*, nay *Jesus Christ*, by his suggesting temptations :) but the *heart* is Christ's peculiar possession and purchase ; and if he shall still there offer to come in and vex you, and prevail against you, and to lodge his suggestions this or any other way with you, you have Law and Christ on your side, by this little light now given you, to cast him out.

CASE,

C A S E. III.

Of conceiving aright of the Holy Trinity.

The third thing that troubles you, is the dis-ranking of the Persons in the Trinity : For though you think the *Holy Ghost* is *God*, yet you have not so high a repute of him, as of the *Father* and the *Son*, because the *Son* addresseth himself to God the *Father* in all his prayers and acknowledgments, in a more immediate manner than unto the *Holy Ghost* ; and therefore you would know if the word *Father* (as in the *Lord's Prayer*) includes not the *Unity* in *Trinity*.

To this briefly consider three things.

1. Without all question, the same *God* which lies under that relative property of *Father*, is the same *God* with the *God-head* of the *Son*, and the *God-head* of the *Holy Ghost*, there being not three *Gods* : and therefore the *God-head* of the *Son* and *Spirit*, are not excluded, but included in the *God-head* of the *Father*, when we look upon the *Father* as *God*, in the *Lord's Prayer*, or any where else.

2. But secondly, the *Father* as *Father*, is never taken for the same *Holy Ghost* in *Scripture* ; nor the *Son* as *Son*, is taken for the *Father* ; nor the *Holy Ghost* as *Holy Ghost*, is at any time taken for the *Son* : For it is a rule in *Theologie*, though the *res substrata*, the thing that lies under the Relative property (vix the *God-head*) of every person, be common and com-

communicated ; yet the same God-head considered as clothed with his Relative property (as *Father, Son and Spirit*) it is not common, but peculiar. For the God-head of the *Father* as *Father*, is not the God-head of the *Son* as *Son*, &c.

3. Hence it follows, that when *Christ* addresseth himself to the *Father* as *Father* in Scripture, it is not because *He* is either a diverse or greater God than the *Holy Ghost*, but it is for two other reasons.

1. Because the *Father* as *Father*, received primarily the wrong that sin did against his work of creation : For the *Father* being the first person in order and creation, the first transient act as (*election* and *reprobation* were the first immanent); hence this work is attributed chiefly to God the *Father*, in respect of our orderly apprehension : and hence man sinning then when he was only made, this is chiefly attributed to be against the *Father*, because his work appeared to be chiefly there ; and not against the *Son*, for his work chiefly appears in *redemption*, he being the second Person, and this the second main and wonderful work ; neither against the *Holy Ghost*, for his work chiefly appears to us in *application*, being the third Person, and this the third main act that ever God will do, or show forth to the world in this life. Hence God the *Father* receiving to our apprehension, the wrong in creation by sin, *He* is the Person that is to be satisfied, and not the *Holy Ghost*. And hence

hence *Jesus Christ*, in all his prayers has a most special eye to *Him*, and not to the *Holy Ghost* (as *Holy Ghost*) because *He* came into the world, by his death, and intercession, and strong cries to satisfie *God the Father*, and not *God the Holy Ghost* as a third Person. And hence it is said, *1. John 2. 1, 2. If any sin, we have an Advocate with God the Father, (not God the Holy Ghost)* because *He* was, to our apprehension, the Person wronged : and hence we are, after sins committed, chiefly to eye the *Father* in our prayers, and to go to him for pardon with our *Advocate* with us ; because to whom offence is chiefly offered, from him chiefly pardon and reconciliation is to be expected.

2. Therefore *Christ* addresseth himself chiefly in his prayers to *God the Father*, because he is the original and first cause of all good ; because he is the first Person in order of subsisting, and therefore first too in the manner of conveying. I know the God-head is the original of all good : but consider the Persons one with another, and so the *Father*, is ever the first in operation, as the *Holy Ghost* is the last in consummation ; for all good comes from the *Father*, *James 1. 17*, through the *Son* by the *Holy Ghost*. And hence in all our prayers we are to look for all good from the *Father*, for his *Son's* sake, to be conveyed us by the *Holy Ghost* : and hence it is said, *John 6. 10. No man comes to me but whom the Father draws* : Why ? It is the immediate office and work of the *Holy Ghost* to draw and apply the soul unto *Christ* : why then

is it said, *Unless the Father draw?* The reason is, because that which was perfected and consummated by the *Holy Ghost*, was intentionally and by way of purpose and decree begun originally by the *Father*: and this is that which Christ's words have chiefly reference unto, *viz.*, the *Father* through the *Son* by the *Holy Ghost* draws.

But I have waded too far in this Divinity, the clear knowledge of which is reserved for us in heaven: But thus much to satisfie you. Yet the word *Father* in the *Lord's Prayer*, I conceive under correction, as it doth not exclude any person of the God-head, so its chiefly set down there, not so much to denote the *Person* of the *Father*, as the *Affection* of *God* as a *Father* to us his *Sons* by *Christ*: which we are to believe in our first approaching to our prayers, to be as, nay to transcend the affection of any *Father* to his *Son*; when we come to call upon him for those *six* things which the Petitions set down for those *three* ends, *Kingdom*, *Power*, and *Glory*, which the *Prayer* concludes withal.

C A S E. IV.

Of going to God immediately.

Your fourth trouble is your *aptness to go to God immediately*, especially when his graces are most striving in his ordinances, contrary to that of *Christ*, *Ye believe in God believe also in me.*

Answ. So indeed it is usual for religious nature often to out-run and get the start of grace;

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as it appears in many other, so in this case you put. Look as it is with every man when God awakens him effectually, he first seeks to his kitchin physick to save himself by his duties, praying, mourning, reforming, endeavouring, repenting, working, before he will seek out to the Physician, and to Christ to save him: Because it was natural to *Adam* to seek to live by his working, it is natural to every Son and branch of that root, to seek to save himself by doing as well as he can, or as God gives him the strength and grace: So it is here. It was natural to *Adam* to depend upon, and go to God immediately, as a creature to a Creator, as a Son to go nakedly to God as a Father: Christ was not then known nor seen: so it is natural to every man when rectified Nature is stirred up, to go immediately to God. It is grace in the second *Covenant* that reveals and draws to Jesus Christ, and to God by Christ, *Heb. 7. 25.*

For cure of this distemper, ponder but these three things.

I. Clearly convince the soul that the immortal, invisible, and most holy God, that dwelleth in an unapproachable light, has set out himself to be seen, or made himself only visible in Jesus Christ; so that he would have no man look upon him any other ways, than as he has revealed himself in his Son: In whom (though in all other creatures his *vestigia* and footsteps are to be seen) as he is *God*, the face of *God* is to be seen; which no creature is able to behold,

but

ubt there, being the brightness of his glory, and the express Image of his Person, *Heb. 1. 3.* And as he is man, the very heart of God, both in respect of Affection, and Will is to be seen ; So that in and through Jesus Christ, especially his human nature, the glory of the great God breaks out like the Sun through the clouds most brightly, in respect of us ; and therefore in and through his human nature we are only to behold God, in whom all that a Christian desires to know, is to be seen, which is the Face and Heart of so dear a Friend, *2. Cor. 4. 6. Job. 14. 9, 10.* For we know by too lamentable experience, how the whole world vanishing in their smoaky thoughts of the glory of God, as he is considered in himself, and not able to conceive or retain the knowledge of him ; did hence invent and set up Images as fit objects for their drunken staggering understanding to fasten upon, and to be limited with ; and hence adored God before these, (as our Popish Hypocrites do before the Altar) and in these and at these, as Papists do in respect of their Images. Hence the Lord to cure this inveterate natural malady, hath in the *second Person*, united himself to man Christ Jesus ; through whom we are both able to our everlasting wonderment to see him, and also here bound only to behold him ; who as he is a fit handle for our faith, so he is a fit object for our weak minds to behold the glory of the most high God in. Wherefore then do you offer to go unto God without Christ, whenas you are not so much as to look upon God, but as he appears in Christ ?

Is not the human nature of the Lord Jesus more
easier to be seen and conceived of, than the in-
visible unlimited eternal God-head?

2. See evidently that there is not any dram or drop of God you have, especially in God's ordinances, but it issues from the blood, and is purchased by the intercession, and delivered unto you by the hand of Jesus Christ. *Ephes. 1. 7. Hebr. 7. 25. John 5. 22.* You should never have heard the sound of the gospel, nor ever have had a day of Patience, nor ever have heard of God's ordinances to find him in; nor ever have been comforted, quickned, enlarged, affected by God's Ordinances, were it not for Jesus Christ; the efficacy of whose blood, and power of whose glorious intercession, doth at the very instant you feel any good in God's Ordinances, prevail with God the Father for what you feel: For the Father loveth the Son, and *has put all things into his hands, Job. 3. 35; that all men might honour the Son; Joh. 5. 22, 23.* all the three Persons plotting chiefly for the honour of the second: so that you may see, nay you are bound to believe, at the time you feel your heart savingly affected in any ordinance now; the Lord Jesus, who is at the right hand of God in heaven, who is now in his glory, now he rememb'ring me a poor worm on earth, now I feel the fruit of his death. O what a miserable forlorn wretch had I been, were it not for Jesus Christ? Mercy could never have helped, enlightned, comforted, quickned, assured, enlarged me; and Justice could never have relieved my dead, bloody, pe-

E *rising*

rising lost Soul, had it not been for Jesus Christ ; whose Spirit, power, grace, comfort, presence, sweetness, I taste, drink, and am satisfied abundantly with, and now do enjoy.

Oh Sir, methinks the sad meditation of this, should make you, in all God's ordinances, where you are apt to say you go immediately to God, to hasten suddenly in your thoughts, affections, praises, to Jesus Christ. Nay, methinks you should speedily have your heart elevated and lifted up to Jesus Christ, and say, I receive this, and taste this from Jesus Christ. Oh, but this is but a taste of the honey-comb with the end of my rod ; and if this presence of Christ's Spirit I feel now be so sweet, what is Himself then ?

3. Labour for increase of love and familiarity with Jesus Christ, by taking notice of him, by coming often to him, by musing daily on his love, as on a fresh thing, banishing slavish false fears of his forgetfulness of you, and want of everlasting love towards you : and then you know love will carry you speedily to him : *amor meus pondus meum*. Nay, grant that you have been a stranger to Christ, yet restore the love of Christ to life again in your soul ; and when you come to his ordinances, where he dwells, your Soul will make its first enquiry for him ; neither will it be satisfied till it has seen him, as we do them we love, towards whom we have been greatest strangers.

C A S E V.

Of applying the absolute Promises.

Your *fifth* trouble is, you know not *how to apply absolute Promises* to your self, as in *Heb. 8*, because they are made indefinitely without condition. Conditional Promises you say you can, if you can find the qualification that gives you right to the good of the promise within you.

Answ. This useful fruitful question, how to apply absolute promises to ones particular, deserves a larger time and answer, than now in the midst of perplexities, I am able, yet willing, to give. For when the Lord saith absolutely without condition, that he will take away the stony heart, and he will put his fear into his people's hearts, &c, and these kind of promises are made to some, not to all, to those only whom the Lord will, and in general to his people; Hereupon the Souls of many Christians, especially such as question God's love towards them, are most in suspense: and therefore when they complain of the vileness of their hearts and strength of their lusts, let any man tell them that the Lord has undertaken in the *Second covenant*, to heal their backslidings, and to subdue their iniquities; they will hereupon reply, it is true, he has promised indeed to do thus for some absolutely, though they have no good in them, but I that feel so vile a heart, so rebellious a nature, will he do this for me, or no? And thus the Soul floats above water, yet fears it shall sink at last, notwithstanding all that God has

has said. I will answer therefore briefly these two things in general.

1. I shall shew you to what end, and for what use and purpose God has made absolute promises, not only to them that be for the present his people, but to them that in respect of their estates and condition are not.

2. I shall shew you how every Christian is to make use of them, and how and when he ought to apply them. For the first of these,

I. First, I conceive, that as in respect of God himself, there are many ends which I shall not mention, as being needless; so in respect of man there are principally these two ends for which the Lord has made absolute promises.

I. To raise up the Soul of a helpless, sinful, cursed, lost sinner in his own eyes, to some hope, at least, of mercy and help from the Lord. For thus usually every man's Soul is wrought, to whom the Lord doth intend grace and mercy; he first turns his eyes inward, and makes him to see he is stark naught, and that he has not one dram of grace in him, who thought himself rich, and wanting nothing before; and consequently, that he is under the curse and wrath of God for the present, and that if the Lord should but stop his breath, and cover his face, and take him away, which he may easily do, and this to be feared he will, that he is undone forever. Hereupon the Soul is awakened and falls to his kitchen physick, as I spake before, prays, and hears, and amends, and strives to grow better, and to stop up every hole, and to amend it self of every

every sin ; but finding it self to grow worse and worse, and perceiving thereby that he doth but stir, and not cleanse the puddle, and that it is not amending of nature that he must attain to, but he must believe, and make a long arm to Heaven, and apprehend the Lord Jesus, (which so few know, or ever shall enjoy) and hereby quench the wrath of God ; I say, finding he cannot do thus, no, nor no means of themselves can help him to this, hereupon he is forsaken of all his self-wisdom and of all his vain hopes, and now sits down like a desolate widow, comfortless, and sorrowful, and thinks there is no way but death and hell, and the wrath of a displeased God to be expected. And if any come and tell this Soul, of God's mercy and pity to sinners ; Ay, saith he, it's true, he is even infinitely merciful unto them who are rent from their sins, and that can believe ; but that I cannot do, and am sure shall never be able for to do ; and therefore what cause have I but to lie down in my sorrow, and to expect my fatal stroke every moment ? Reply again upon this Soul, and tell him, that though he cannot believe, or loosen his heart from sin, yet that the Lord has promised to do it, that he will subdue all his iniquity, and he will pardon all his sin, and that he will cause men to walk in his ways, &c ; True, saith the Soul again, he will do thus for his own people, and for them he has chosen, but I never had dram of grace in my heart, and there is no evidence that the Lord is mine own, or that I am his : Here again the Soul lies down, until the Lord discovers to the Soul

Soul that he will do these things for some that have no grace, or never had grace ; for these promises were made to such.

Hereupon the Soul thinks thus ; These promises are made for some that are filthy ; for why should God pour clean water upon them ? for some that be hard-hearted ; for why should he promise to take away the stony heart from them ? &c : and if unto some such, and I being such a one, why may not the Lord possibly intend and include me, seeing he has not by his promise excluded nor shut me out ? Indeed I dare not say he will, but yet how do I, or men, or Angels know, but yet I may be one ? Hereupon Hope is raised to life again : seeing God has undertaken the work for the vilest, it is possible he may do it for me, now when I am vile and can do nothing for my self. And thus you may see the *first end* and use of absolute promises, to be as it were, twigs to uphold the sinking Spirits of hopeless, helpless, distressed Souls.

2. The *Second end and use* of them is this ; To create and draw out faith in Jesus Christ in the promises. For as the Law begets Terror, so the promises beget Faith. Now no conditional promise firstly begets Faith ; because he that is under any condition of the Gospel, in that man there is a presupposed faith. It's God's absolute promise that firstly begets faith ; for *Faith is not assurance, but the coming of the whole Soul to Christ in a Promise, John 6. 35* : And then the Soul believes in Christ, when it comes to Christ : Now this God works in the Gospel. (1) The Soul is raised

raised up by Hope : And being raised, it (2) comes to Christ, which is Faith, by vehement unutterable desire : And being come to him it (3) Embraceth Christ by Love : and thus the match is made, and the everlasting knot is tied.

Now as you have heard, the absolute promise works hope of relief from Christ : and if it works hope, it also works a desire, or coming to Christ by desire. Oh ! that thou Lord wouldst honour thy grace, thy power, thy love, thy promise, in helping me a poor cast-away ! And thus Faith is created, as it were, by this absolute promise : for it cannot but move the heart of any one that ever felt his want, to cry mightily to the Lord for help, if he has any hope, seeing the Lord has promised to do it for some. Oh saith the Soul, that thou wouldst do it for me ! And surely, were [it not for this absolute promise of God, no Soul would desire, because he would have no hope to be saved, or to seek for any thing as from the hands of God. And thus you see *to what end* God makes and *to what use* a Christian may put these absolute Promises.

II. For the second thing, *viz.* *How and when a Christian may apply these Promises.*

I answer, every Christian is either,

1. Within Covenant with God, and knows it ; or

2. Within covenant with God, and knows it not ; or

3. Out of covenant indeed, for his present state and condition, yet he is in fieri, or making towards it.

If

1. If he be in *Covenant, and knows it*, then you may easily perceive how and when he ought to apply promises unto himself: For he may boldly conclude; If God be his God, then all the Promises of God shall be made good unto him; if he be a Son of God he may boldly challenge at all times at the hands of God, (nay, in some respects, at the hands of Justice it self) the fulfilling of God the Father's will delivered in the several Legacies of the promise bought by the blood, and sealed by the same blood of Jesus Christ, that they may and shall be made good unto him: that is clear.

2. If he be in *Covenant, and knows it not*, and questions hence whether God is his or not, and consequently, whether the promises belong unto him; then this rule is to be observed: let him so sue and seek for the good of the absolute promise until by reflecting upon his own acts, herein he perceive himself adorned and dignified with the qualification of some conditional promise; and then if he can find the condition or qualification within himself, then as you judge and write, he may conclude, that the conditional promise belongs to him; and if one promise, then all God's promises, and therefore that absolute promises are his own, because at least one conditional promise is. For no unregenerate man is within the compass of any one conditional promise of grace, unless you will say he is under the everlasting love of God; the Promises of grace being but the mid-way between the eternal purpose and decree of love, and the glorious certain

tain execution of that love in time. The promise being the break-day of God's most glorious love, which must shine out in time.

Object. But here you will say is the difficulty, viz, how I should so seek for the good of absolute promises, as therein to find my self within the compass of some conditional one?

I answer, It is done chiefly by *three acts.*

1. By being *humbly contented*, that seeing the Lord has absolutely Promised, to work and do all for the Soul he intends to save, even when it can do nothing for it self, and that he has taken the work into his own hands, so that it is his promise, offer, office and honour to do all; that therefore you *lie down*, not sluggishly, but *humbly at the feet of God, and contented to have him to be your God*, and for ever to be disposed of in any thing by God, if he will fulfil his covenant in you; contented to part with any sin, if he will rend it from you; contented to know any truth, if he will reveal it to you; contented to do any duty, if he will enable you; contented to shine bright with all his glorious graces, if he will create and maintain them in you; contented to bear any evil, if he will lay his hand under your head, and thereunto strengthen you; and so seeing the Lord promised to undertake the work for some, put out the work, and put over your Soul, to him, that he would fulfil the good that his covenant promiseth in your self. Now when you do thus, which, no question, you and many a Soul doth, many times reflect upon this act, and see if you cannot or may not find your self by

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it under the condition of some conditional promise ; and if you do, then are you bound to believe all God's promises are and will be *Yea* and *Amen* unto you. Now that you do so by this act, it self speaks plainly : For how many conditional promises are made to the meek ? *Blessed are the meek, Mat. 5* ; and to the humble, whom God will raise up ? For this is not *saving Meekness*, to be quietly contented to be or to do, or to bear any thing that the Lord will have me from mine own strength and feeling ; but to be, to do, or to bear any thing that the Lord will have me, if the Lord enable me. Many a stout heart would gladly have Christ ; but if he cannot have him in his own terms, *viz.*, Christ and his lusts, Christ and the world too, or by his own strength and power ; he will have none of him, but desperately casts him away, and faith, what shall I look after him any more ? I cannot pray, I cannot believe, I cannot break this vile and unruly will, this stony adamant heart : thus the pride of a man's heart works. Now he that is truly meekned and humbled, he is contented gladly to have God his God, and Christ his Redeemer, and that upon Jesus Christ, his own terms. First, *on his own covenant* : now what is that ? why it is this, I will give you the good, and work in you the condition too ; I will give you my self, and therefore will not stick to give you an eye to see, and a heart to receive too. This is the covenant : now hereupon a humbled Soul accepts of Christ according to his covenant, *on his own terms* thus, *viz.*, Upon the

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condition Lord, that thou wilt humble me, teach me, perswade me, cause me to believe, and in every thing to honour thee ; Lord, I am contented gladly and joyfully to have thee ; do therefore what thou wilt with me. Just as a sick man tells his Physician, who comes not to him on these terms, If you will make your self half whole, then I will cure you, and do the rest for you ; but being utterly unable to cure, or to know how to cure himself, he tells his Physician ; I am content you should begin and perfect the cure, and so honour your skill and love in me, to be contented to take any thing if you will give it me, and if I offer to resist that, you should bind me, and so do any thing with me.

2. The second act is, earnestly to long and come to Christ, to cleave unto Jesus Christ by fervent and ardent desire, that he would make good those absolute promises to you, seeing that they are made to some, and that they do not exclude you. For when you ponder well, and see what wonderful great things the Lord promiseth to some, whose heart cannot but be stirred up to say, as that woman in another case, *Lord, give me of that water to drink !* and as they in the fifth of John, *Lord evermore give us that bread !* Now doing this, reflect upon this Second act, and see if unto it no conditional promise belongs, and you shall find an affirmative answer from the word. For what is this longing after the good, not of *some* (which many hypocrites do) but of *all* the promises, but that which the Scripture calls *Thirsting ?* who are commanded to *come and*

and drink of the waters of life freely, Isa. 55. 1, 2 ; and Hungry ? to which all good things are promised, Mat. 5. 6 ; and Coming to Christ, as I spake even now ? who has given this as the first fruit of eternal election, and which kind of people he will never cast away, John 6. 37. Now when you see these promises belonging unto you, why dare you not conclude but that all these absolute ones are your's also ?

3. The third act is this ; Seeing God hath promised absolutely such good things in the Second Covenant, but hath not set down the time when, or how much grace he will give, and seeing only he can help ; therefore look up, and wait upon the Lord in the use of all known means, until he makes good what he hath promised to do, and perform, and work for you. Say, as beggars that have but one door to go to for bread, if none hear, or hearing help not, lay themselves down at the door, and say ; I will wait here, I am sure I perish if I go away, or quarrel with them in the house because they help me not so soon as I would ; and therefore I will wait, for it may be their compassions may move them as they pass by to help me. So do you. Many a Soul comes and longs for the good of the Promises; but if the Lord do not speedily help him, he goes with discouragements, fears, and discontents, or despair, or sin away, and saith one of these two things, either I shall never have help, or I come not truly, and hence I feel no help. Oh remember that bread is only to be had at the door, to be distributed when the Lord seeth need, not when

when we would, or think we have need ; and therefore wait here and say, if I perish here, I will at the feet of God, and at the feet of the promises and covenant of God, &c.

Now reflect upon this act, and see if you may not find some conditional promise annexed unto it ; which surely you may, and I will name you but two, *Isa. 40. 29, 30, 31* ; and *Isa. 6. 4, 4.* And if the conditional promise belongs to such a Soul, you may easily conclude the absolute promises are your own : and the chiefest use you are to make of them when you know them that they are your own, is to press God to make them good daily to you ; and to believe as verily and really, as if you had the performance of them, that they shall. It may be you will ask me, *How shall I know whether I have these conditions truly in me ?* I answer, sincerity is a very witnessing grace ; the frequent meditation of the Scripture will give you much light, to judge of the sincerity of them, and that which Saint Paul speaks, *I. Cor. 2. 12*, I say unto you, *We have not received the spirit of the World, but of God, whereby we know, (or may know) the things that are freely given to us of God.*

3. If he be out of the covenant, but yet God begins to work with some common work of his grace upon him ; all that I would say to him, and all the use he can make of such absolute promises, consists in these things ;

1. Let him consider the *Freeness* of God's promise, whereby he may be stirred up to conceive some hope it may be made good to him in time.

time. For the promise is very free and large, excluding none (except those that sin unpardonably) be their sins and natures never so vile before God; and yet not including any by name, for that is in the conditional promise: And hence such an one is to make this use of it; Who knows but the Lord may have pity upon me in time? and so hang thy hope upon him.

2. Let him consider the *Worth* and *Price* of God's promise, bought by blood, and for which some men would give a thousand worlds for the benefit and comfort of; and hereby raise up his heart, as by the *Freeness* of it to hope, so by the *Price* of it to esteem of the thing promised, above pearls, and all the honour and pomp of the world.

3. Let him consider the *Fulness* of the promise, which is a plaister as big as his sore, just answerable to all his wants, nay infinitely more large than his wants. And surely *these three* things will draw his heart to long for the promise; and then you know what is conditionally promised and bequeathed to them that *thirst*: For similitude is the ground of love. Now when the *Fulness* of the Promise is seen, there will appear such a *sutablenes* and *fitness* of the promise to his soul, that he cannot but long for it.

Thus much for the *fifth* trouble.

C A S E VI.

Of Unwillingness to and Weariness in solemn Services.

Your *sixth* trouble set down in *two* heads, put into *one* for brevity, *viz* secret unwillingness to seek *God* in the *strictest* solemn services, before you enter into them; weariness of them while they last; and gladness when they are gone: the reasons which you mention are, partly fear of not using them aright, together with melancholy, and lastly, the strictness of them.

Answ. It is very true, there is abundance of wildness in our hearts, which naturally seek to have their liberty abroad, and cannot endure to be pent in the narrow room of holy performances, extraordinary duties, &c, no more than children can be pent up from their play. And hence we are weary of them, and glad to think of their departures and ends. And truly it is one of the most grievous miseries that a holy heart can feel, and I beseech the Lord of heaven and earth to keep you, and me, and all his for ever, while we are here in our valley, under the sense of such distempers, as our greatest misery. And therefore me thought it was a solemn sweet speech of an honest man to his friend; who seeing him oppressed with such distempers as you mention, and perceiving him to droop under them, he came cheerfully to him, and suddenly said unto him; 'I can tell you good news, the best that ever you heard, *viz*, Assoon as ever you are in Heav-

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“ ven, you shall serve Christ without weariness :” Which words well thought on, revived the man. That which I would speak, with as much tenderness of compassion as I am able, to you, I refer to these things.

1. That a child of God is never usually weary of the duty, but rather of his vile heart, to think of, and to look upon ; that in the duty *Christ's yoke is easie, and his burthen light*, to him that takes it on his neck and puts his Soul under it. The duty nakedly considered in it self, is glorious in his eyes, and sweet to his Soul ; and hence sometimes never well, but when he considers his dead, blind, barren, and senseless heart, that he is to carry to the duty, and that he fears, and has felt will abide with him in the duty : Oh ! this grieves, here the Soul pincheth. An Hypocrite is weary of the duty : a child of God rejoiceth in it ; but he is weary of his sin, and unsavouriness and weariness in the duty. I persuade my self Sir, that you may soon mistake your spirit herein ; you think you are unwilling to come to the duty ; and are weary of it, when indeed, it is your glory, joy, and love ; but it is because you fear you can do it no better, that troubles you, that you have such a vile heart in it. And if your trouble be from hence, the good Lord increase it in you daily : and withal, bless the Lord, and say, ‘ Lord though I am weary of my vile heart, in these days of humiliation, in these Sabbaths ; yet I bless thee, the days and duties themselves thou knowest are dear unto me ; It is not Lord because I am weary of

of thy word, [but because I can do it no better, I am weary of my self, and this vile heart] : Here is much love in such a spirit to the Lord. And believe it, Sir, your love wants not it's recompences ; and remember that the Lord respects you not according to your duties done, but according to your love in them, and to them. And therefore those duties you are ashamed to own, the Lord will not be ashamed to crown.

2. Consider you must and shall be baited with these distempers of heart, sometimes more, and sometimes less, as long as you live. It is part of Paul's body of death which he must carry with him, till he come to bury himself.

3. *Those means* which may help you to be freed from them (a little at least) are these among many.

1. Be but truly and really, not by fits and darkly, sensible of them : men in deep miseries, are not unwilling to be helped out.

2. Judge ye not rigorously of God, as though he were a bloody austere God ; as he did of his master, whose talent he had, and hence never improved it ; but look upon God as having a Father's heart and affection towards you in the meanest and greatest performances ; which is double, either to give you strength to do what you cannot, (*I can do all things through Christ*;) or having come to him for it, to accept of what you would do for him, as if it were done. And this will make you joy in the poorest performance, that though it be never so full of vileness, yet the Lord out of his fatherly love, accepts of it as glorious.

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3. Renew morning and evening by sad and solemn meditation, the sense of God's love to you in Christ, and in every duty that he sets you about; and love will love and like the yoke, and make the commandments that they shall not be grievous to you.

Thus I have briefly done with *your new troubles*; which you mention, you say, because you may not have the like opportunity of writing again. It may be so, and therefore I have desired to satisfie you, which I beseech the Lord himself to do.

Next you come to reply to my first Letter, of which I have kept no copy, as I never did of any, and hence may and do forget what I writ then unto you. So much light as your Letter lends me to bring things to mind, I will gladly take, and be more brief in answer.

QUESTION I.

Strength of Grace how obtained?

You find the *Strength of grace* to be got in you rather by *argumentation*, than *inward communication and influence* arising from the union to Christ: And this troubles you.

Answ. To which I answer these three things.

i. That as the old sinful nature is communicated from *Adam* the first to us, without any argumentation; so the new nature, which is the *seed, foundation, and plot of all grace*, is diffused

fused into us by the *second Adam* when we are united to him, without argumentation. It is only by divine operation. The Lord leave not me, nor any friend I have, to a naked *Arminian* Illumination and Perswasion.

2. That to the increase of those habits, and drawing out the acts of the new creature, the Lord is pleased to use moral and rational perswasions ; as in the instance you gave, Christ died for us, then hence the love of Christ constrains : But remember withal, it is not the bare meditation, or strength of reason or perswasion, that elicits such divine and noble acts in the heart and affection ; but it is the blood of Christ sprinkling these serious meditations, that makes them work such graces in the soul ; which I might shew at large : which blood is the salve, though argumentation is the cloth or leather to which it sticks, and by which it is applied ; but from such leather comes no vertue, all of it is from the blood of Christ, which by argumentation heals the Soul. For if it were nakedly in the argumentation to stir your heart, and to work strength of grace ; what should be the reason that sometimes you are no more moved by all your argumentations, than a mountain of brals is by the winds ? why should the same truth affect you at one time, and not at another, when you are as fitly disposed to be affected as at the first ? Therefore consider it is not your reason and argumentation, but Christ's blood that doth all, by as admirable, and yet secret operation.

3. Your union to Christ on your part is begun, and

and partly wrought by the understanding : and hence the good that you get by it at any time, it is from your union, or part of it at least.

QUESTION II.

Of *spiritual Union.*

Again you ask me, whether *Calvin* doth not express fully my thoughts about our *Spiritual Union* in his *lib. 4. cap. 17.*

Answ. I answer, I have forgot what he has writ, and my self have read long since out of him ; and for the present I have no books about me where I am ; and therefore cannot satisfie you in this : neither know I when I shall seek to find out the book and place : If I have leisure, I will either write to you, or tell some of your friends *before I am gone*, what he hath said or writ that way, &c.

QUESTION III.

Of the *Cure of Atheistical Thoughts.*

Again *thirdly*, You desire me to tell you *how* my self *came to the Cure of Atheistical Thoughts* ? and whether they did wear out, or whether they were rationally overthrown ? &c.

Answ. I answer,

1. At first they did wear out, meeting with fruitless and dead-hearted company, which was at the University.

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2. The Lord awakened me again, and bid me beware lest an old sore brake out again : And this I found, that strength of reason would commonly convince my understanding that there was a God ; but I felt it utterly insufficient to perswade my will of it, unless it was by fits, whenas I thought God's Spirit moved upon the Chaos of those horrible thoughts : and this I think will be found a truth.

3. I did groan under the bondage of those unbelieving thoughts, looking up, and sighing to the Lord, that if he were, as his works and word declared him to be, he would be pleased to reveal himself by his own beams, and perswade my Heart by his own Spirit of his Essence and Being ; which if he would do, I should account it the greatest mercy that ever he shewed me. And after grievous and heavy perplexities, when I was by them almost forced to make an end of myself and sinful life, and to be mine own Executioner ; the Lord came between the bridge and the water, and set me out of anguish of spirit, (as she prayed for a child) to pray unto him for light in the midst of so great darkness : In which time he revealed himself, manifested his love, stilled all those raging thoughts, gave return in great measure of them ; so that though I could not read the Scripture without blasphemous thoughts before, now I saw a glory, a majesty, a mystery, a depth in it, which fully perswaded : and which light (I desire to speak it to the glory of his free grace, seeing you call me to it) is not wholly put out, but remains, while I desire to walk closely with

with him, unto this day. And thus the Lord opened mine eyes, and cured me of this misery ; and if any such base thoughts come (like Beggars to my door,) to my mind, and put these scruples to me, I use to send them away with this answer ; *Why shall I question that Truth, which I have both known and seen ?*

Object. But you say this remedy is good, *viz*, of *Prayer* ; but that you cannot use it, especially because you question the truth of God.

Answ. Yet, dear Sir, give not over this Trade ; you will doubtless find it gainful, when it may be God hath laden you more with these thoughts, and made you loath your self for them. But the thing seems strange to me, if I mistake you not, *viz*, that your heart will not be perswaded, but that you must resolve your doubts concerning the Perfection of Scripture, not by seeking to harmonize those passages that seem to cross one another, but by ascribing some humanity or error, (if I may interpret you) to the penmen ; seeing St. Paul saith, *We Prophesie but in part*, and seeing one of the Evangelists leaves out the doxology in the Lord's prayer.

Sir, if you take these thoughts, arising from these and the like grounds, as your burden, I do not blame you, but pity you in that respect ; but if your judgment indeed think so, I am sorry you should harbour such thoughts one hour within doors : for you know that *holy men writ the Scriptures* (but so far they might err, but it is added) *as they were inspired*, or as the Original has it, *as they were moved or carried in the arms of*

of the *Holy Ghost* ; and so how could they err ? how could God lie ? It is true, *Paul* did prophesie but in part ; and is this an argument, because he did not prophesie fully, therefore in some things he did not prophesie truly ? I am perswaded you will say, there are many things my poor thoughts have suggested to you, as true ; and yet I am perswaded I do in them prophesie, if I may so say, but in part. The Spirit of God directed the four Evangelists to write ; yet so, as they did not all write what another writ, but in great wisdom left some things doubtful and short in one, which are more clear and full in another : and hence the Doxologie is fully set down in one, and not in another ; and many reasons I could set you down why, but that is needless. I grant you ought not to put up all with a charitable opinion of Scripture ; but if you can, by reason, reading, and comparing, help your heart to a full perswasion, this is Scripture : But many things you cannot get satisfaction for, by that way and means, but still your Spirit will be left dark and doubtful ; What course will you here take for resolution, *which is Scripture* ? The Papists say it is so, because the Church has christened it for Scripture ; you say you will see reason for it that it is so, or else you cannot be satisfied ; then I fear you will never be satisfied. I think, In this case therefore these two things you are to do.

1. To go to God by Prayer, to give you a resolution of all your doubts, and by some means or other, some light to see whether this is his word

or not. 2. If this be his word, that he would perswade your heart of it, that it is so : For the least resolution which *is* Scripture, and which *is not*, is made by the same perswasion, and sole perswasion of the same Spirit that writ the Scripture.

Concerning the *Angels* that appeared to *Mary*, see *Gerard*; and he briefly, I think, will satisfie you, in your answer to the particular scruples about the Scripture sense, and the dissonancy of them. Only this I will add to the last clause about these things, that if the Scripture be inspired by the Holy Ghost, and that not only in the sum and substance of it, but in every word and sentence of it, which I think you will not doubt of, when you have considered it ; then I think it will undeniably follow, that the same Spirit of truth is also a Spirit of order ; and hence the method of various penning of it, is from the Spirit too, which you say you stick at.

Answ. 2. Again, to the latter part of your third complaint concerning your spirit being burthened with *involuntary infirmities*, as *burdens*, but not as *sins* ; I say nothing now, because I perceive by one part of your reply that the Lord has done you some good by the first answer ; only it is your grief you cannot fear them, nor condemn yourself for them, as damning sins. For satisfaction of which, I hope this reply to your second trouble will give you some satisfaction.

QUESTION IV.

How to know the Movings of the Spirit.

Again to your fourth question, to know whether these changes you have sometimes, and these *movings of your Spirit*, are not of natural temper, or God's Spirit. It seems I did a little mistake the meaning ; because you meant not the main work of grace, but occasional stirrings and movements of the heart ; as by reading some pathetical Letter, your Spirit is moved with joy or sorrow, which it may be will not be stirred at some other time ; as by drinking a cup of wine, the spirit is made more cheerful and lively, &c.

Answ. I answer these three things.

1. First, That it is very usual for natural affections to be raised by a natural temper, as by drinking, eating, noveltiness of the Gospel. John's candle-flies were ravished with the Gospel : People are naturally moved sometimes by a thundring Minister, yet never a whit the more grace, &c. And it is a good speech of Doctor Ames : *Arminian universal grace* (as they describe it) may be the effect of a good dinner sometimes.

2. That though the *Being* of grace depends not upon the temper of the body, yet the *Exercise* of grace, and *many gifts* of grace, together with the *feeling* of it, doth. And hence a good dinner, and sometimes wine, to a sad melancholy (if gracious) heart, may remove *rem probinentem* that may keep grace, as joy and thankfulness, from working ; and so take the grace and draw it out,

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50 *How to know the Movings of the SPIRIT.*

not create and diffuse the grace. The Prophet called, you know, for a Ministril ; which some think, and that upon good grounds, was to raise up his heavy heart, and make him cheerful and fit to speak : the body is the instrument, which if it be broken, the best graces will hardly sound ; but if whole, then they will.

3. If you would know when these things only draw out grace, or make a thing like unto grace in the Soul ? I answer, by *these two things* chiefly.

1. If it be true grace, it ever makes you *more humble* and *vile* in your own eyes, and say ; Lord, why dost thou give me any desire to thee, any cheerfulness in serving thee ?

2. It makes you *more thankful*, and to bless the Lord that he thus remembers you : For this is a *standing rule*, ‘ What ever comes from nature, and a Man’s self, it ever builds up it self, and returns to self again ; what ever grace comes from Christ, it drives a man out of himself, by making him *humble* and draws him unto Christ that sent him, by making him *thankful* ’. I think all graces, and stirrings, and movements that have not this double effect in some measure, are to be suspected ; and if they have, it is dangerous to doubt whether they are true or no.

QUESTION V.

Of seeing a Positive Providence.

Again, Your fifth thing about Providence ; you say you cannot see a *positive* providence, although you do see a *negative* providence in all your occasions, and comforts, and crosses, you meet withal ; as namely, you can thank God for not taking away your life, &c, but you cannot see God giving it.

I answer,

1. Consider what I writ to you at first about this question in general.

2. Ponder sadly whether any creature or appurtenance to it, has its *Being* from it self, or from the will and word of God ; *viz*, I will have such a man to be, and such a memory to be, &c. I think you will say nothing can make it self ; therefore here is a *positive* providence in having life, liberty, &c.

3. Consider whether the same will and word that gives it a *Being*, together with all the appurtenances to it, doth not also give it *Act* and *Motion*. That it is so, I thus demonstrate ; (1) Every creature is made for an *end* ; for no wise efficient, but works for some wise end : (2) That no creature can lead it self to its end, if sinful or irrational : (3) God must and doth lead it by its several acts and movings to that end : Hence (4) Every *act* is determined by God.

And although I grant some creatures move freely, some necessarily ; yet it is from a *positive* will

will and providence that they move, act and see. Therefore you see what cause there is to see a positive providence in every thing.

Concerning the rest of your letter ; Oh that I had time and heart to write more ; yet I hope I have writ enough for this time, and the Lord knows whether ever more or no. However I thank you heartily for improving me this way of writing, *who have my mouth stopt from speaking.* I wish I had more such friends to deal thus with me, and my self more time, and a more fruitful head and heart to improve my self this, or any other-like way for them : For who knows what breathings of God's Spirit are lost for want of writing, especially when there is no season of speaking ? Truly Sir, I meet with few that are much troubled in that manner as your self ; but they go on in an easie, quiet, and very dangerous way : Which troubles, I perswade my self, keep you awaking, when other virgins are slumbring ; and after which, I am perswaded, the Lord intends to use you for more than common service, if you wade well through them. However as I said before, be not discouraged, or too much perplexed in sorrow for them : For surely, as far as I can guess, the Lord is preparing you for himself by them. I shall not forget you, though I never see you : And I beseech you, if you have any spark of affection toward me kindl'd by these few lines, remember when you are best able to pray for your self, *to look after me and mine, and all that go with me on the mighty waters* ; and then

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to look up and sigh to Heaven for me, *that the Lord would out of his free grace but bring me to that good land, and those glorious Ordinances*; and *that there I may but behold the face of the Lord in his Temple*, though he never delight to use me there, though I and mine should possibly beg there; and that if the Lord should call me to my solemn work and service for the good of his *Church and People, and company that go with me, or are gone before me*, that then the Lord Jesus would reveal his secrets to me, and enable me the little time I have to live, to be fruitful to him, and to have a larger heart than ever for him. As for your self, I shall desire the Lord to keep you blameless and unspotted in an evil world; and that as he has begun, so he would perfect, and crown his divine graces and work in you; and that you may be preserved from national sins, which shortly bring national and most heavy plagues; and that the presence of the Lord may abide with you, and in you, until the Lord call for you. Remember my kind love to your Father, whose name I have forgot, and by whom I could not send these lines, being then hindred by business. Now the peace of Jesus Christ be with you, and keep you upright and blameless till death. And if I never see you more till the last and great day, then Farewel, Farewel.

Yours in JESUS CHRIST,

T. S.



